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**Horse Patrol
Team
Interim Report
July to
December 2020**

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Budget

Total Project Budget: \$32,314

Total Requested from IEF: 2,496,247KSH

Project Start Date: January 2020

Project End Date: December 2020

Is any part of the project underway? Yes, the project has been underway since 2012 with IEF support since 2014.

1. Conservation Needs

Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) was established in 1999, due to growing concern for the forested expanse surrounding Africa's second-highest mountain. Extensive poaching of wildlife, logging of indigenous tree species, overgrazing and large scale growing of marijuana were destroying the region.

MKT Vision

The Integrity of the Mt Kenya ecosystem for the welfare of all who depend on it.

MKT Mission

To drive collaborative action for the sustainable management of Mt Kenya's biodiversity and natural resources through partnership with government, communities and civil society organisations.

MKT Values

The organization has earned the trust of its partners through its integrity and the dedicated work of its field teams and management. Upholding these values is important to the organization and it believes its small size and clearly defined focus area will help it to maintain its critical relationships with key stakeholders

MKT Horse Patrol Team

ST Benefits and outputs To decrease the prevalence of illegal activity, in particular, elephant and bushmeat poaching in the northern areas of Mt Kenya National Reserve; To work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service to extend the area of surveillance into Meru and Sirimon; To increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park; To improve the links with wildlife NGO to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing.

LT Conservation of Elephants

In the past decade, Maisels et al. (2013) suggest there has been a reduction of around 30 per cent in forest elephant rangeland. The HPT continue to assist in habitat protection, data collection, monitoring and deterrence of human-elephant conflict and implementation of mitigation measures. This has been highlighted in the Wildlife Conservation Society research conducted by Vanleeuwe in 2016 and 2020, revealing stable elephant populations on the mountain.

3 & 4. Goals and objectives

The Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) anti-poaching Horse Patrol Team, operational since 2012, was set up to *enhance the capacity of law enforcement personnel to decrease the level of poaching (especially elephants) and other illegal activities mainly but not limited to the Northwestern section of Mount Kenya.*

Along with law enforcement, the short-term objectives are:

- To decrease the prevalence of illegal activity, in particular elephant and bushmeat poaching in the northern areas of Mt Kenya National Reserve **e.g. destroying snares, arrests.**
- To work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service to extend the area of surveillance into Mucheene and Sirimon which have seen a marked increase in habitat and wildlife destruction in high altitude zones **e.g. GPS training, installation of satellite camps to cover greater distances.**
- To increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park **e.g. HPT visual presence is distinct from the surrounding community.**
- To improve the links with wildlife NGO to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing **e.g. engaging local scouts, local community conservation sensitisation.**

The HPT is one of the few mounted community ranger teams in Kenya. The team attract much interest from national and international media along with equestrians, attracted to the HPT's unique work to further enhance conservation efforts. The uniqueness of the team has also brought increased attention to the region as a whole and the members of the team in particular.

5. Activities that differ from the original proposal

None.

6. Conservation outcome for elephants and other wildlife – major findings and accomplishments to date

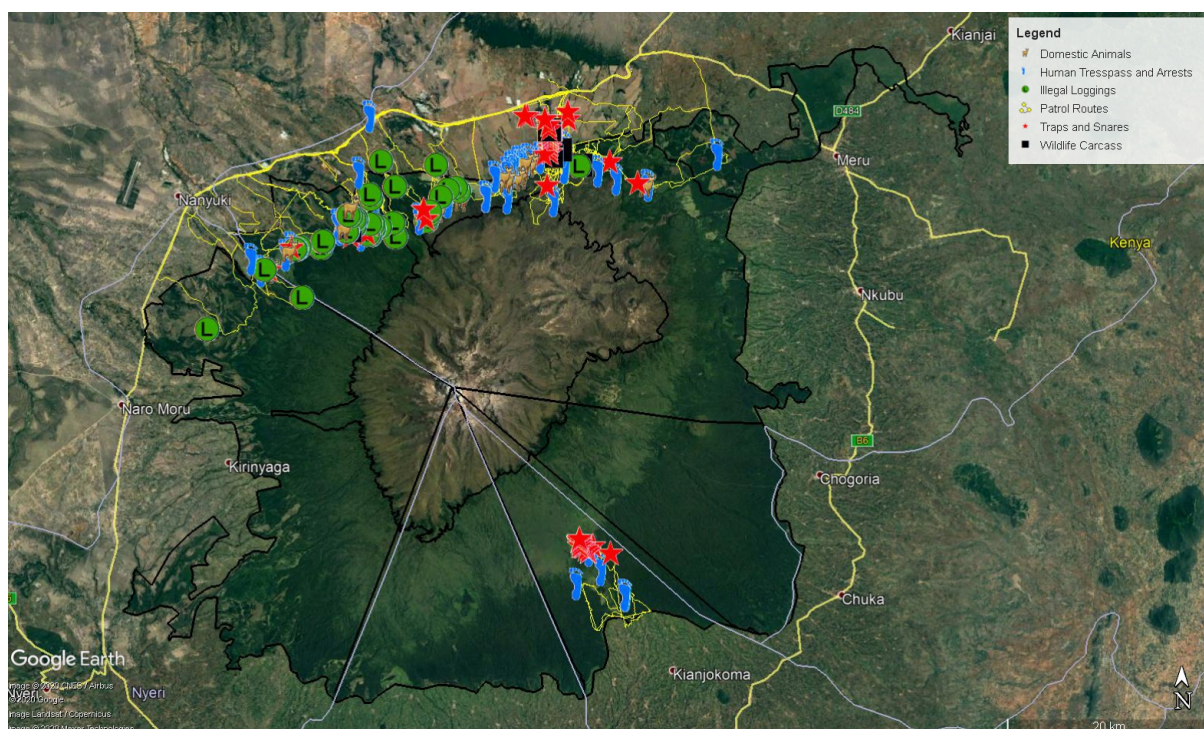
Mount Kenya, at an altitude of 5,199 m is made up of the Mount Kenya Forest Reserve/National Reserve (200,000 ha) and the Mount Kenya National Park (71,000 ha) which are administered respectively by the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Kenya Wildlife

Service (KWS). The Forest reserve was established in 1932 while the National Park was gazetted in 1949. Mount Kenya, an extinct volcano, is the second-highest mountain in Africa and was created some 2.5 to 3.5 million years ago. In July 2000 the Forest Reserve was gazetted as a National Reserve under KWS.

Since the mountain is well known for its biodiversity, geology and cultural importance it has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Forest Reserve and National Park have a great diversity of habitats which harbor over 1000 plant species as well as several endemic plants, mammals, reptiles and chameleons. There are 6 major vegetation zones which have been classified according to altitude and floristic composition. They are: Montane forest 1,600-2,400 m; Bamboo thickets 2,400-2,850 m; *Hagenia-Hypericum* woodland 2,850-3,000 m; *Erica* bushland/shrubland 3,000-3,300 m; Alpine zone 3,300-4,350 m and Nival zone 4,350-5,199 m. The status of a World Heritage Site confers certain obligations, one of which is to protect endangered or rare species from becoming locally extinct.

The Mount Kenya Forest Reserve/National Reserve and National Park are also an Important Bird Area (IBA) with 53 out of Kenya's 67 African highland biome species and six of the eight species that make up Kenyan mountains endemic bird area. The avifauna is reasonably well known but there is little information on the seasonality, distribution and habitat requirements of some of the threatened species. Forest wildlife includes but is not limited to Elephant, Mountain Bongo, Leopard, Cape Clawless Otter, Cape Buffalo, Bushbuck, Black-Fronted Duiker, Suni, Black and White Colobus and Sykes monkey. Black rhino have become extinct.

Only by protecting the habitat and protected areas, along with tackling the ivory trade and hunting, can elephants continue to roam freely in the wild. The Horse Patrol Team (HPT) record the number of patrol hours, distance covered, and illegal activities found using the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool. The map below shows patrol routes and findings for the period January to November 2020.



Map 1 to show patrol findings for HPT January to November 2020.

A monthly summary of activities is shown below:

January - Most of the teams were involved in the elephant dung survey through mid-January to the end of the month. HPT found 7 people in the forest (two unsuccessful pursuits and 5 verbal warnings for firewood collection), 43 domestic animals, 3 wire and string snares and 1 cable snare, along with 8 logging incidents (11 charcoal kilns, 115 charcoal bags).

February - Evicted 30 domestic animals, deactivated 2 string snares, destroyed two charcoal kilns and confiscated 18 bags of charcoal. HPT and MWG cleared up large amounts of litter especially plastic left in the Reserve after a fundraising running event organized by the Meru County was complete.

March - Discovered three wire snares. A total of two fence posts and seventeen timber planks and eighteen tree stumps. Animal carcasses recorded were of an elephant, this was an old carcass of an adult elephant with tusks intact. Elephant carcass was secured, and tusks removed by KWS Marania sector.

April - Found one person in the Reserve and removed 11 active wire snares as well as 5 logging incidents and 4 illegal shelters. Two charcoal kilns were found and 17 fence posts along with 2 tree stumps. One arrest was made for illegal logging.

May - HPT conducted both foot and horseback patrols from their base and a six-day mobile Patrol in Sirmon area, joined KWS's Rapid Response Unit (RRU) from KWS HQ Naru Moru. The camping patrol combed areas of Gatinga, Karuri, Kasarani, Kiambogo, Kithithina and Sirimon which are hotspots for both illegal charcoal production and timber felling. On their return from the camping patrol, they focused around their camp including Emburi Kisima boundary where several active wildlife snares were destroyed. 11 wire snares and 1 string snares that were all removed. Thirteen charcoal kilns were destroyed along with 19 charcoal bags, five firewood bundles and 6 fence posts.

June - Conducted foot and horseback patrols. They focused their patrols in the areas around their base. A total of 75 cows were evicted, along with 16 snares deactivated (9 wire, 1 string and 6 cables). Three logging cases were recorded, including six charcoal kilns and one illegal shelter.

July – The team conducted both foot and horseback patrols. They focused their patrols in the areas around their camp. The team was also split into two so that other members joined KWS in Sirmon for one-month intelligence-based patrols. HPT found a person in Reserve, evicted 33 domestics, found 3 wire snares, 5 charcoal kilns and 2 carcasses.

August - Conducted both foot and horse patrols. They focused their patrols in the areas around their camp. 42 domestic animals were documented in the Reserve. Four snares were removed and disabled, 7 logging incidents including 6 charcoal kilns and 6 firewood bundles were also recorded. Two people were arrested for illegal logging and 10 verbal warnings were given for firewood collection.

September – The team both foot and horse patrols around their camp, occasionally joining MWG. They also conducted a one-week camping patrol from Mawingu KWS sector. HPT found 10 people directly in the Reserve and a staggering 423 livestock (mainly sheep and cows). Three string snares were removed along with 6 charcoal kilns and 35 charcoal bags. 26 fenceposts were confiscated. Two people were arrested for logging.

October - Patrols around their camp and occasionally joining MWG and KWS during a mobile patrol in Thambana. Two members also were selected to participate in the riparian survey. HPT found six people in the Reserve, 283 domestics and 19 cable, wire and string snares. Several women were verbally warned for illegally collecting firewood and a handful

others escaped arrest.

November - Conducted both foot and horseback patrols around their camp, and occasionally joining MWG in their joint patrols. A few members of the team were also pulled to help in river riparian survey that ended early this month. Many animals were seen on patrol but few illegal activities.

8. Problems during the grant period

COVID-19 update on Mt Kenya projects

With more community members out of work or risking social-economic destitution due to COVID19 restrictions or economic downturn, on the ground reports and patrols are finding more people inside the National Reserve and turning to illegal poaching or forest harvesting to make ends meet. This increases the risk of HEC as humans start to move into the elephant's safe habitat more frequently, along with other habitat destruction risks from cattle grazing, risk of forest fires and charcoal production

We quickly realised however that projects had to go ahead to protect wildlife and communities. For example, reducing camping patrols was not an option (although previously planned) due to a large and widespread increase in illegal activities as described below. This includes an increase in snaring, and in particular, as mentioned below, large mammal snaring. We are worried about this trend and our teams are doubling efforts to deter and arrest individuals found in the forest and deactivate and remove as many snares as possible. Secondly, if a fence stopped working, we had to maintain and fix it so that the communities were still protected from crop-raiding wildlife.

For example, we noted between July and September an increase in illegal activities month on month with the summary given below:

- **222 people** were directly encountered within the Reserve, the highest observed in the past six months.
- Nearly **1200 domestic animals** were recorded grazing (cows, sheep, donkeys and goats)
- **121 snares (mainly string)**, another high were removed including **2 fishing nets** by the Ragati team.
- **64 charcoal kilns** were found.
- **326 fenceposts**.
- **21 arrests were made**, mainly for illegal logging, and two others for bushmeat poaching.
- Tourist revenue for Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) at Mt. Kenya has **declined by 96 per cent**, triggering budget cuts, thereby making community-based forest security patrols even more critical.

The pandemic has affected the organisation with shifts to our operating dynamics and project future potentials. The largest impact, apart from the restrictions in the field, has been reductions in funding from partners and supporters who depend on events or tourism for their sources of income. In particular, our 2021 10to4 Mountain Bike Challenge and title sponsor Tropic Air, AFEW Giraffe Centre in Nairobi and the Tusk Marathon which have both reduced and halted funding. These are events or projects that depend on tourism, large gatherings and international donors. Although we don't directly depend on tourism as an organisation, many of our supporters do, including Trusts or partners that depend on

investments. We are grateful to other organisations such as the IEF who continue to support our teams.

Increase in illegal threats since 2016

The most important results of the 2020 survey are that illegal threats increased by 51% per cent since 2016. There may well be a link between the larger spread of elephants and larger spread of illegal activities in 2020 (compared to 2016). Illegal logging multiplied 3.5-fold and livestock numbers increased by 75 per cent. Meat poaching was found to be more spread and in the same areas where logging increased. Elephant distribution was more spread than in the same season in 2016 which may indicate some competition for grazing with livestock. Livestock negatively affects the mountains carrying capacity to sustain its wildlife grazers.

9. Project success

The HPT conducted a total of 121 foot patrols, 68 vehicle patrols and 100 horse patrols. They covered nearly 5000 kilometres and nearly 1200 hours were spent on patrol for the year. They found 62 people directly in the Forest Reserve and 12 others indirectly. Nearly 1000 unpermitted domestic animals were found (cows and sheep), along with 84 snares (wire, string and cable) and 55 logging incidents (53 charcoal kilns, 12 firewood bundles, 58 fenceposts, 35 stumps, 17 planks and 187 charcoal bags) in the 11 months. Eight illegal shelters were discovered. The team have out 18 verbal warnings, 6 unsuccessful pursuits and made 9 arrests. The team also discovered 5 carcasses.

10. Next step and implications for future conservation actions

Our Marania Wildlife Guard team has permanently relocated to our Mucheene Satellite camp. As we had built stables there, and as the area the Horses Patrol becomes increasingly secure, we are going to assess the viability for a possible move or 2nd base for part of the HPT team. Once we have finalised our financial situation for the year, we weigh up the options for a secondary sight. The options include a possible move to Ragati in the South once our new base there (in a more remote location) is complete or set up a satellite camp near Sirimon to the South of our current base at Kisima.

11. Human interest story

Ranger uniting for rangers!

The team support their fellow rangers in the Wildlife Ranger Challenge held in 2020 to raise vital funds for Mt Kenya rangers. Here you see the IPT starting their run from the Horse Patrol Base. Almost 100 ranger teams and 2000 dedicated supporters from 80 countries completed the challenge to raise funds for men and women on the front line of conservation across Africa. It was a fantastic team building event and our teams all took part either supporting or through videos and social media.

The continental-wide collapse of wildlife tourism caused by the Covid-19 crisis has eliminated essential funding for wildlife protection. Rangers across Africa have had their salaries significantly cut, and many have been furloughed – leaving families destitute and wildlife vulnerable and unprotected.

With many rangers stretched to capacity and international and national borders re-opening, it is feared that protected areas across Africa will experience a rapid increase in illegal poaching as well as a decline in wellbeing and economic security for the communities to whom this wildlife belongs.

Almost 100 ranger teams competed against each other in support of their counterparts and to bring the sector back to full force. Over the weeks leading up to the event, they took part in several physical challenges that reflect the rigorous training they undergo to become a ranger. The Wildlife Ranger Challenge culminated in a half marathon race through the forest around HPT in which the rangers had to carry their typical 25kg backpack and equipment. An example of some of the training (starting at the HPT base can be seen below).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=53&v=0PtA6herSdY&feature=emb_logo

12. Summary of progress and results (500 words)

Six men and nine horses are based at Kisima Farm, Timau. The team conduct horseback patrols often using intelligence-driven reports on illegal activities to map their routes around the base. Currently, the team usually return to the Kisima stables but are now expanding their patrols to the north-east and northern regions including Mucheene and Solo Camps.

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Elephant populations in the Mountain Conservation Area consist of the Mt Kenya sub-population, estimated at 2,500 elephants by Vanleeuwe, in 2020, the Aberdares sub-population estimated at approx. 3,570 elephants by Vanleeuwe 2017 and a total of 8,021 elephants in the Laikipia-Samburu-Meru-Marsabit ecosystem. No elephants were poached in the area in the six months.

A large part of what the HPT do is to engage with the community to educate them on the need to conserve our forests as our provider of the most vital of ecosystems service but also to educate them and the magistrates they work with about the seriousness of logging and poaching as economic crimes and the heavy penalties and sentences this illegal activity now carries.

As trained firefighters, the HPT team have engaged in 2 fire drills this year. They assisted in securing the route for the Wildlife Ranger Challenge ensuring the Ranger and guest runners were secure from wildlife. Earlier in the year they also secured the routes for the 10to4 mountain bike challenge.

13. All organisations associated with project

Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, Kisima Farm, North Kenya Veterinary Services.

14. Financial report

HPT Expenses January to October 2020				
Budget Item	Amount	Matching	Actuals	Total IEF
	IEF (\$USD)	Other partners (\$USD)	\$USD	Project Costs (\$USD)
Project Personnel				

Salaries \$150 x 7 x 12	12,600		10,714	10,714
Northern Sector Supervisor (\$450*12months)/3 Northern Teams	1,800	1,800	1,786	-
Programme Officer \$1000/month*12*0.20	2,400	-	2,321	2,321
Medical \$400/year	400	-	194	194
Insurance \$109/year*6	650	-	580	580
Meals				
Rations \$30/month x 7 x 12 = \$2520 \$30/month Northern Sec Supervisor x 4 = \$120	2,640	-	4,823	4,823
Horse Feed for 10 Ethiopian ponies 15 bales/month @ \$3/bale = \$45 x 12 = \$540 Oats 480kg @ \$0.4/kg = \$192 x 6 = \$1152 Barley 300kgs @ \$0.4/kg = \$120 x 6 = \$720	2,460	-	2,096	2,096
Equipment				
Uniform and Team Equipment \$100/year*7 \$500/year misc (camera, USB, batteries)	850	-	603	603
Horse equipment (Saddles & tack)	400	-	645	645
Services				
Veterinary costs \$1000/year	1,000	-	326	326
Training of horse and horsemen \$600/year	600	-	1,183	1,183
Transport costs for fuel and vehicle maintenance (plus insurance)	1,500	-	5,514	5,514

480km@\$0.52/km x12				
Misc				
General housing & stable repairs \$800/year	600	-	-	-
Operational Costs - Admin, Accounting, Telephone, Reporting & Monitoring @ 10%	500		3,125	3,125
Total	28,400	1,800	33,911	32,125

15. Images

HPT team photos sent via wetransfer to Sarah and Debbie. Activity images below.





Snare removal.



Illegal cattle and sheep grazing.



Charcoal kilns.



More charcoal kilns.



Illegal logging.



Illegal grazing inside the Forest Reserve.



Horse foot care.



Illegal logging site.



Firefighting training.



Firefighting training.



Clearing the route and supporting their fellow rangers at WRC.



An elephant moves through the underpass in the Mt Kenya Corridor.

16. Video Clip

Sent via wetransfer to Sarah and Debbie.

17. Conference publications

None.

18. Media coverage

JEMA article December 2020

19. Online resources

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